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The Charlotte Observer

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Expelled student kills 17 in Florida high school shooting

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Jorge Zapata, 16, a sophomore, hugs his mother, Lavinia Zapata, after Wednesday's shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., that killed at least 17. The suspect, a former student, was taken into custody about an hour after the attack.

BY TERRY SPENCER
AND KELLI KENNEDY
Associated Press

PARKLAND, FLA.

A former student opened fire at a Florida high school Wednesday, killing at least 17 people and sending scores of students fleeing into the streets in the nation's deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Conn.

The shooter, who was equipped with a gas mask and smoke grenades, set off a fire alarm to draw students out of their classrooms shortly before the school day ended, officials said.

Authorities offered no immediate details on the 19-year-old suspect or any possible motive, except to say that he had been expelled for disciplinary reasons.

Frantic parents rushed to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School to find SWAT team members and ambulances surrounding the campus. Live footage showed emergency workers who appeared to be treating the wounded on sidewalks.

"It is a horrific situation," said Robert Runcie, superintendent of the school district in Parkland, about an hour's drive north of Miami. "It is a horrible day for us."

The suspect was taken into custody without a fight about an hour after he left the scene. Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said the suspect was armed with a semiautomatic AR-15 assault rifle and "countless magazines."

"It's catastrophic. There really are no words," Israel said on Twitter.

The attacker used the fire alarm "so the kids would come pouring out of the classrooms into the hall," Sen. Bill Nelson said in an interview on CNN.

"And there the carnage began," said Nelson, who said he was briefed by the FBI.

The Florida Democrat said he did not know if the gunman

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MEDAL COUNT

Country	G	S	B	Tot
Germany	7	2	3	12
Netherlands	5	4	2	11
Norway	3	5	3	11
Canada	3	4	3	10
United States	4	1	2	7

As of 7 p.m. EST Wednesday

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LOCAL

SUSPENSIONS DOWN AT CMS

Principals are keeping the youngest children in school, but tensions remain over the racial gap. **3A**

NATION

HARD LINE ON IMMIGRATION

President Donald Trump called on lawmakers to oppose bipartisan bills that do not embrace his approach to the issue. **8A**

Will 'Black Panther' be a cultural game-changer for Charlotte?

BY THÉODEN JANES
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When Kristen Thompson and Keesha Reynolds created their Facebook event page, the goal was simple: Organize an outing for them and a group of friends to see "Black Panther" on opening night.

"I knew a lot of my friends were wanting to go see this movie," says Thompson, 35, of Charlotte. "So I was just like, 'Hey, let's all go at the same time, and let's put it on Facebook so we won't forget.' I made it public. I didn't realize it was gonna be shared that many times. It started off with maybe 50 different people, and now there's almost *10,000 people* saying that they're interested in going."

Another "Black Panther"-related event in Charlotte, called "The Official Blackest Weekend Ever" on Facebook (more on that later), shows 13,000-plus people interested.

And while there's no definite explanation for how these Facebook events went viral, one could probably make an educated guess.

Even though it doesn't open until Friday (with early screenings nationwide Thursday night), "Black Panther" – the latest installment in the Disney-Marvel comic-book movie franchise – has become a pop-cultural phenomenon of epic proportions, for some pretty historic and progressive reasons.

It's the first major superhero movie starring a black actor since 2008's "Hancock." But unlike that Will Smith flick, "Black Panther" features a nearly all-black cast (including Chadwick Boseman, Michael B. Jordan, Oscar winner Lupita Nyong'o), and was helmed by a critically acclaimed African-American director (Ryan Coogler, of "Fruitvale Station" and "Creed" fame).

Sure, 1993's "The Meteor Man" (which starred Robert Townsend), 1994's "Blankman" (Damon Wayans) and the "Blade" trilogy (Wesley Snipes) featured black superheroes. But the color of their skin seemed rather incidental. "Black Panther," meanwhile, revels in its blackness – or, more specifically, its African-ness: The hero, played by Boseman, is heir to the throne of a secretive (and fictional) African country that happens to be one of the most technologically advanced nations in the world.

And to top it all off? The PG-13-rated movie is fantastic – exquisitely acted and directed, with thrilling action and surprising emotional heft, full of cultural pride but devoid of racism. As of Tuesday night, 97 percent of the "Black Panther" reviews logged by aggregator site RottenTomatoes.com were favorable.

It's reason enough for people like Kristen Thompson to turn going to see the movie into an event. It's inspired several people in her group, she says, to make plans to wear patterns and outfits inspired by traditional African clothing to screenings, as several "Black Panther" stars did at the L.A. premiere last month.

The film even inspired a viral fundraising initiative called the Black Panther Challenge. Started last month by New York City-based marketing executive and philanthropist Frederick Joseph, it's a crowdfunding

SEE 'BLACK PANTHER', 2A

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